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8 July 2011

Mr P Thorpe
Interim Headteacher
Linden Primary School
Headland Road
Evington
Leicester
LE5 6AD

Dear Mr Thorpe

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Linden Primary School

Following my visit with Patricia Potheary, additional inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 July 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was the first monitoring visit since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement, which were identified during that inspection, are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2011

- Ensure that procedures for making the school a safe place to learn are implemented urgently and rigorously.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - establishing a shared vision that focuses on raising pupils' attainment and increasing their rates of progress
 - developing robust management systems, rigorous self-evaluation and effective improvement planning
 - ensuring that whole-school strategies are implemented fully by all and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness
 - establishing effective engagement and communication systems between the governing body, staff, and parents and carers
 - ensuring that all statutory procedures and regulations are fully implemented and suitably recorded and reported.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 100% is at least satisfactory and 50% is at least good by December 2011, by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to challenge the most-able pupils
 - ensuring that all pupils have suitable opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning
 - using marking consistently to inform pupils of their next steps in learning
 - improving pupils' language skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to talk to each other and participate actively in their learning
 - implementing a curriculum that caters for the needs of all pupils.
- Work more effectively with parents and carers to promote good attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of Linden Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the senior leadership team and other members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, a small number of parents and carers and groups of pupils.

Context

Following the inspection in April 2011, the local authority appointed an interim headteacher to lead the school, until issues surrounding the substantive headteacher's suspension are resolved. This appointment has enabled the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher to resume their previous substantive senior leadership roles. The local authority has also acted to remove the school's delegated powers and appoint an interim executive board to replace the governing body.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The school's analysis of the end of Key Stage 2 results for 2011 show that pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. A similar picture exists for pupils in most other year groups. Analysis of the current Year 2 cohort's assessment indicate that their attainment is lower than average. Although this cohort has made satisfactory progress from a lower than average starting point, they have not been able to close the attainment gap with the standards achieved nationally. Evidence arising from lesson observations confirms that pupils' attainment is broadly average. Although pupils make satisfactory progress over time, progress in some lessons is good. This is most evident in lessons where teaching is of a higher quality and teachers have identified precise learning objectives for pupils to achieve. There is little difference in the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils. However, in classes where activities are matched more carefully to pupils' abilities there is better challenge, enabling more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the progress expected.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils enjoy school and talk positively about their learning experiences. Behaviour in and around the school is often good. Pupils are polite and courteous. They respond well in classrooms. In the few instances when pupils lose interest and disengage from learning, it is often because the lesson holds little relevance or the pace of learning is too pedestrian. Pupils say that, on a very few occasions, incidents of

bullying do occur. However, they also recognise that the school has procedures for managing incidents that are followed successfully and pupils say they feel safe in school. They are particularly pleased about the reintroduction of organised games at lunchtime and the opportunities for some of the older pupils to act as playground leaders.

The school's catering staff make a very positive contribution to the promotion of pupils' healthy lifestyles through the provision of excellent school meals that are cooked on site.

The school's efforts to improve pupils' attendance are proving successful. The focus on raising families' awareness about the importance of pupils attending school regularly has resulted in higher attendance levels than were achieved earlier in the year. To sustain and improve these recent gains, the senior leaders plan to share their records showing the correlation of pupils' attendance levels and their resulting attainment with parents and carers to show the strong causal evidence that exists.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Work more effectively with parents and carers to promote good attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and, although it varies across the school, it is satisfactory overall. Teachers are making more imaginative use of the curriculum to plan lessons around themes and activities that capture pupils' interest. This was particularly evident in the best lessons. For instance, in a Year 6 science lesson pupils were enthusiastically learning about reversible and irreversible changes by carrying out practical experiments. Similarly, in a Year 2 design and technology lesson that had 'pirates' as a theme, pupils enjoyed developing their practical skills to create hand puppets in readiness for writing and performing a short play script. This creative approach to the curriculum provided good opportunities for pupils to work together and apply their language skills in a practical and relevant way.

Teachers are planning lessons to meet pupils' differing needs. This is helping ensure that work is pitched increasingly at the right level to offer pupils opportunities to experience both challenge and success. However, in too many lessons the learning objectives are not focused precisely on the knowledge, understanding or skill that is to be learnt. As a consequence, assessment of pupils' attainment and progress often focuses on the completion of a task rather than how much learning has occurred. This reduces teachers' ability to use accurate assessment information to plan pupils' next steps for learning.

Relationships in the classrooms are strong. Pupils listen well and respond quickly to instructions. Teaching assistants are often deployed well, although there are times when they are not engaged actively to support learning.

The quality of pupils' work in books has improved since the previous inspection but teachers are not yet making the standards they expect clear or explicit. As a consequence, pupils do not routinely present their work with enough care and are not taking sufficient pride in what they record.

Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously. They often use praise as encouragement and, in some instances, provide written guidance as to how work could be strengthened and improved. This advice is more evident in pupils' English books than in their mathematics books. However, there is limited evidence of pupils reflecting on teachers' comments and taking action to improve presentation and other aspects of their work.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 100% is at least satisfactory and 50% is at least good by December 2011 – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

In a remarkably short amount of time, the newly appointed interim headteacher has created a strong sense of stability and brought a clear focus to the school. There is a feeling that things are now moving in a positive direction and that there are strategies to bring about the improvements needed. However, much remains to be done and many issues have yet to be fully resolved before the school is delivering the quality and standard of education expected.

The school's senior leaders work together well and have a clear and accurate understanding of the improvements needed to be made. Importantly, they have also developed an action plan that sets out how these improvements are to be achieved. By monitoring the quality of teaching across the school they have identified a number of inconsistencies that exist. To remedy this issue, plans are already in place to implement a new staffing structure, at the start of the autumn term. The planned reorganisation of the phase leaders, who have responsibility for managing teachers working in particular year groups, is seen as being central to holding teachers to account for pupils' progress and attainment. Plans are being finalised to provide training for phase leaders and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science so that they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Following the previous inspection and the subsequent meeting to discuss the decision to instigate an interim executive board, the governing body has not met and has not been proactive in driving improvement. As a result, action has not yet been taken to ensure full compliance with all statutory requirements.

The school's communication systems with families are appropriate. Newsletters provide parents and carers with information about developments taking place at the school. However, further work is planned to develop the school's website and ensure parents and carers have access to more information about the school and the progress being made to improve matters.

In response to the previous inspection's recommendations, action has been taken to make the school safe. All medications are stored and managed appropriately. Work has taken place to remove the hazards identified, both inside and outside the school. The grounds and buildings have been made more secure to restrict unauthorised access to the site. The school's analysis of its parents' and carers' questionnaire shows that the vast majority of parents and carers now feel that their children are safe at school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that procedures for making the school a safe place to learn are implemented urgently and rigorously – satisfactory
- Improve leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has responded quickly to the previous inspection report and instigated actions to bring about the improvements needed. It has reacted positively to feedback that the original statement of action was 'not fit for purpose' and needed amending by revising the plan and making it sharper. The local authority's appointment of an interim headteacher has played a key role in bringing about the leadership that was needed and enabled the school to initiate plans to resolve the weaknesses identified. Local authority consultants are working alongside and supporting staff to strengthen the quality of teaching. Their input is already making a significant contribution to the school's improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the interim executive board acts quickly to hold the school to account and that there is full compliance with all statutory requirements.